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ABSTRACT

Four papers on responding to diversity in the schools were presented at the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory's Urban School Leadership Mini-Conference. This document presents two, a framework for the discussions by John Attinasi and an exploration of how differences in culture and language affect academic achievement. "Academic Achievement, Culture, and Literacy" by John Attinasi asserts that it is time to take the most crucial aspect of the educator's mission, leadership in educating the children in urban schools and communities, and to renew and advance attention to their achievement in the stressful urban setting. Multiculturalism requires not only a change in curriculum, but accompanying changes in school climate and pedagogy. "Cultural Diversity and Academic Achievement" by Barbara T. Bowman discusses cultural differences in the achievement of poor and minority students. The explanation for the differences in school performance lies in the difference in life experience between groups. Recognizing these differences in assessment of children and in teaching, particularly in the early years, is essential in educating culturally and linguistically diverse students. (The first paper contains 5 references and the second lists 16.) (SLD)

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Urban Monograph Series

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Cultural Diversity and Academic Achievement

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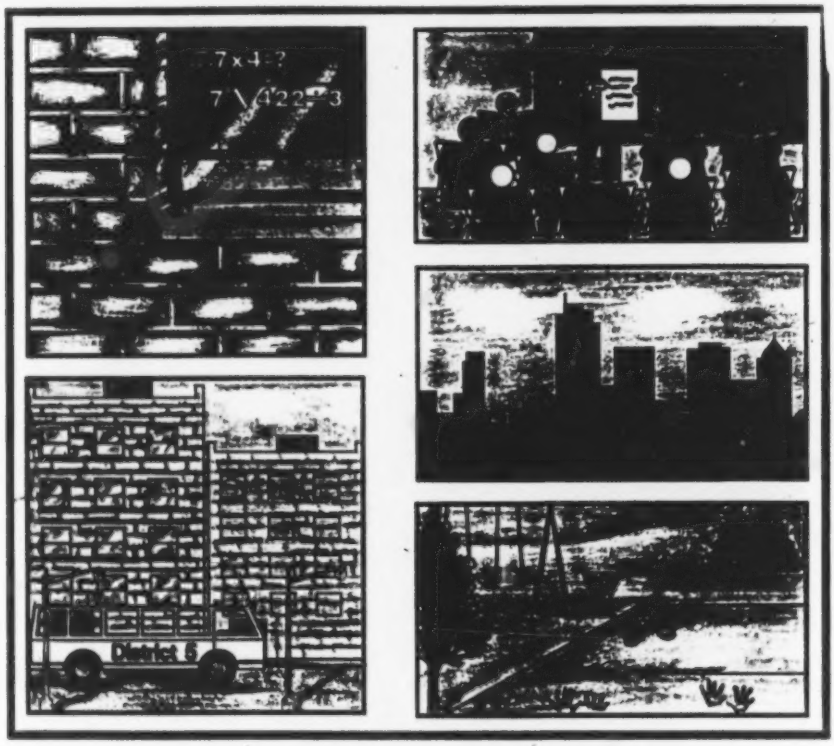

UD030 442

by Barbara T. Bowman
Erikson Institute, Chicago, Illinois
with an introduction by John Attinasi, California State University, Long Beach

NCREL

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Dear Colleague:

We are pleased to introduce the Urban Education Monograph Series, a new initiative of the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) that works to connect practitioners and policymakers to important research and promising practices.

Throughout the region's urban centers, children and youth continue to achieve at levels significantly below national norms. While many urban students complete school and make a successful transition to higher education, increasing numbers of poor and minority youth in the region's urban centers either drop out of school or finish school lacking the skills and knowledge needed to continue their education successfully and to participate fully in today's high-tech, information-service economy.

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- Synthesis of Scholarship on Multicultural Education (Geneva Gay, University of Washington at Seattle)
- Cultural Diversity and Academic Achievement (Barbara Bowman, Erikson Institute, with an introduction by John Attinasi, California State University)
- Multicultural Education: Challenges to Administrators and School Leadership (Carol Lee, Northwestern University, with an introduction by John Attinasi, California State University)
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Sincerely,

Lynn J. Stinnette

Lynn J. Stinnette
Director, Urban Education

Preface

This paper, "Academic Achievement, Culture, and Literacy: An Introduction," by John Attinasi, provides a framework for a series of four papers presented at the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory's 1993 Urban School Leadership Mini-Conference in Lisle, Illinois. The authors of these papers, John Attinasi of California State University, Rosalinda Barrera of New Mexico State University, Barbara Bowman of the Erikson Institute in Chicago, and Carol Lee of Northwestern University, served on a panel discussing the topic, "Language, Literacy, and Culture in Urban Schools." "Academic Achievement, Culture, and Literacy: An Introduction," adapted from the author's speech at the mini-conference, introduces the concept of multiculturalism and multicultural education. In *Multicultural Education: Challenges to Administrators and School Leadership*, Carol Lee identifies key issues in implementing multicultural education and discusses implications for curricula and instructional practice. Barbara Bowman, in *Cultural Diversity and Academic Achievement*, guides our understanding of how students' differences in culture and language affect student performance and achievement in school. She offers recommendations for changing programs and practices starting in early childhood. In her forthcoming paper, Rosalinda Barrera discusses how school-community partnerships promote literacy development among culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Academic Achievement, Culture, and Literacy

An Introduction

by John Attinasi
Professor, Department of Teacher Education, and Director,
Bilingual Credentialing California State University, Long Beach

"Respect for Diversity is the Hallmark of Democracy"

Providing universal public education has always been considered a function of U.S. democracy and a leaven of the society. For urban school educators, schooling has many new roles within the broad democratic concepts of instruction and equity. We are committed to educating all children and believing that all can learn and achieve. As the noted scholar Asa G. Hilliard III has said, "Respect for diversity is the hallmark of democracy," (Hilliard, 1991/1992). Students of diverse backgrounds and social conditions, languages and dialects now populate our schools, a situation that we would have thought unusual a few decades ago. The graduating class of the year 2010 is already born and two years old. Demographics tell us that most of these children are culturally and linguistically unlike the majority of teacher candidates, teachers, and administrators.

As educators, we have to balance overwhelming new information, new demands, and new technology with the ways we know how to teach young people. We cannot do it all. But being unaware of innovations in child development and in educating culturally and linguistically diverse students is like ignoring the polio vaccine. It is time to take the most crucial aspect of our professional mission, leadership in educating the children in urban schools and communities—who are more culturally diverse than ever—and to renew and advance our attention to their achievement in the stressful urban setting. This challenge may be discomforting.

Opening the Debate about Multiculturalism

I used to love the word "closure." I liked the end of a course, finishing data gathering, closing the debate before a vote, completing an article, picking the last tomato, and washing the last dish. Because I relate to products more than process, it has taken me many years to appreciate the process of things. A conversation with a sociolinguist colleague, Ngure wa Mwachofi of the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, changed my mind about having "closure." He told me about post-modern philosopher Michel Foucault's analysis of the term. Foucault said that closure illuminates a

practice that has always exhibited a dangerous tendency: the need that many people have to label and dismiss, to feel good and stop thinking. This meaning of closure has bothered me. It relates to how we think of politics and multiculturalism.

In politics, we are so confused by the end of the Cold War that we want closure on whether or not the Russians are our friends. How we use language is also political. In language, closure means that we can change a word to create a "politically correct" phrase. Should we say Hispanic or Latino? Asian, not Oriental? Closure enables us to have comfort. It puts a label on a box—a label that inhibits us from opening the box to see what is really inside.

Many people have sought closure in the process of defining multiculturalism and multicultural education. Once we get past the disuniting debates about what books or knowledge should be required (and those debates are necessary for every person to go through in order to establish a foundation of common knowledge about issues of cultural diversity in curriculum), we then need to engage in multicultural awareness, learn to appreciate diversity, and take action. Having closure often ends in "doing multiculturalism" this year, like we "do dinosaurs" in second grade. What is discomforting is that the definition of multiculturalism is unsatisfying, because it does not provide the closure that most people seek. They would be disappointed to hear James Banks, key scholar in the field of multicultural education, say that multiculturalism is a concept, a movement, and a process, and, as such, there can be no closure.

The Evolution of Multiculturalism

The concept of multiculturalism itself has evolved. There was first the notion that only culturally and linguistically diverse people need multicultural education. Then came the human relations idea that everyone's uniqueness and feelings should be acknowledged. Next, the ethnic studies movement advocated the study of excluded minority groups and world literatures. There are now proponents who attempt to combine all three of these perspectives to help enhance self-esteem, enable positive interaction, and raise global awareness. Among scholars in the field, the goals behind education that is multicultural and socially reconstructionist are to improve academic outcomes; promote equity among gender, ethnicity, and exceptionality; and effect change in the society beyond the school.

This is merely the *concept* or group of concepts about multiculturalism. As a *movement*, multiculturalism affects school leaders, parents, community members, and society as a whole. Multiculturalism challenges the vertical view of cultural development as the refined production of an elite (mostly white men of leisure and power) and recognizes, from an anthropological

perspective, that all cultures have resources and value. Paulo Freire worked to develop literacy in marginalized people by initiating dialogue with them to help them recognize that the ideas, actions, values, and objects of everyday existence are cultural and worth reading about.

As a *process*, multiculturalism obviously does not provide closure. Change is the only constant. This concept is what philosophers say and how calculus students solve problems. Viewing multiculturalism as a process should return us to a larger sphere of schooling as a function of U.S. democracy and a leaven of our society. The process of multiculturalism should connect our school learning to the elements of authentic learning—including critical inquiry and other higher-order thinking—rich multidirectional conversation and other linguistic modes, social engagement and support for learning, and, most of all, real world applications in classroom instruction, all of which are essential to principles of democracy. In this regard, multicultural educational processes serve to open opportunity for learning to all students by stimulating students to engage in different forms of inquiry. For instance, students can pursue different forms of inquiry when addressing societal issues (e.g., the environment, politics, and social reform) across the curriculum—in mathematics, science, language arts, social studies, and so on.

Multiculturalism: Implications for School Climate and Pedagogy

Multiculturalism requires not only a change in curriculum, but a change in school climate and pedagogy. In addition to implementing a higher-order, multicultural curriculum, schools need to address affective issues. Schools and the people in them need to invite diversity, eradicate stereotypes, enhance self-esteem, encourage all members of the community to have a voice, and demand educational achievement. The central practice in schools is communication, where there is equal emphasis on spoken, written, and nonverbal forms. The focus on communication in urban classrooms is critical, given the centrality of language and the variety of linguistic expression in homes and schools.

Without looking deeply into multiculturalism, the need for closure becomes a thin veil for a tendency toward exclusion of underrepresented cultural groups. All of our practices and conceptualization require critical examination and change. We must begin where each child and each adult is at the moment. We cannot ask for action from a person coming to first awareness. We need to communicate so that awareness matures into making changes and taking action appropriate for our work, our place in the culture, and our place in the social system.

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John Attinasi is professor in the Department of Teacher Education and director of bilingual credentialing at California State University at Long Beach. From 1990 to 1993, he was associate professor and director of the Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP) at Indiana University Northwest in Gary. UTEP is a multischool district and university consortium for school-based professional preparation and development serving Northwest Indiana. It is one of the few programs that prepares teachers for the urban context. Classroom teachers and university faculty work in instructional teams as co-instructors and co-researchers, and parents and community members are involved in program decision-making. Attinasi's extensive written work includes articles on teacher preparation for language and cultural diversity and language attitudes, discourse, and development in the Latino community (and particularly the Puerto Rican community). He received his doctorate in anthropology from the University of Chicago and is a fluent speaker of Spanish, French, and Chol Maya.

Cultural Diversity and Academic Achievement

by Barbara T. Bowman
Erikson Institute

One of the most serious and explosive issues in the United States today is how to meet the educational needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. If current trends in educational achievement continue, millions of students (primarily poor African-American, Asian, Native American, and Hispanic) will not obtain the education necessary for full participation in the economic and civic life of the country. Furthermore, the inequality that results from differences in educational achievement of children is likely to make the social stability of the United States increasingly doubtful.

Differences in the academic performance of children appear early. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NEAP) reported that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and many children of color consistently achieve below the national average in mathematics and language skills, with the gap widening as children continue through their school years. The longer some children stay in school, the greater the discrepancy between their educational performance and that of white and middle-class students. Gradually and inexorably, the chances for academic success diminish for poor and minority students as they are launched into trajectories of failure (Alexander and Entwisle, 1988, p. 1). Early childhood, then, is a critical time for intervention in the schooling of at-risk children if we expect to change outcomes.

The importance of early childhood education is reflected in the first of our national goals: All children will come to school ready to learn. Those of us who study early development and learning find this statement to be awkward. After all, don't all children learn? The ability to learn is an essential condition for living and, with very few exceptions, all children can and do learn. Furthermore, whether children learn in school depends as much on the school environment as it does on the children. Therefore, many of us have rephrased this goal to read: All children will come to school *ready to learn in school,* and all schools will be ready to *teach all children.* The changed phrasing emphasizes not just the *children's readiness, but the school's* readiness. In this paper, I suggest that understanding how differences in culture and language affect children's learning can help us understand what schools can do to improve outcomes for many of this nation's children.

How do we account for the difference in children's academic performance? Is something wrong with poor children and children of color—their genes or their families—that undermines their development and achievement? Of course not. While some children are at risk for abnormal development because of the deprivations inherent in living in poverty or in crisis-ridden families, most poor and minority children are developmentally normal and their families ably carry out the essential child rearing functions. Poor and minority children's range of adaptive and learning capabilities is as broad as other children's. The explanation for the differences in school performance lies in the difference in life experiences between groups—the worlds in which children of different cultural and socioeconomic groups live do not encourage the same beliefs and attitudes nor do they emphasize the same skills. By ignoring the differences between children—their experiences, their beliefs, their traditional practices—schools limit their own ability to educate these children.

Over the past half-century, child development research has provided an increasingly comprehensive knowledge base to explain how young children acquire skills and knowledge and define the environmental supports needed to stimulate and sustain development. This research, best represented in the work of Piaget (1952), focused on similarities in children's development. However, by placing emphasis on universal principles, this work did not adequately appreciate the cultural differences in the way that children express competence and achievement. Indeed, in school, behaviors characteristic of middle-class white children have been seen as the only valid representation of competence —the standard by which all children are judged. Schools have ignored or rejected different cultural expressions of development that are normal and adequate and on which school skills and knowledge can be built. Consequently, children from poor and minority families have been judged to be inadequate because they do not already know nor do they easily learn the school curricula. Inadequate communication, inaccurate assessment, and inappropriate education are the inevitable results, when poor and minority children are labeled as delayed and their families are labeled as dysfunctional because they have different resources, lifestyles, and belief systems.

A model of development that incorporates a full understanding of the role of culture might be characterized as encompassing two sides of the same coin. On one side are intrinsic characteristics, responsive to the genes that define both human and individual potential. Intrinsic characteristics include the capacity to learn—to categorize objects, to form interpersonal relationships, to learn language. These abilities are tempered by a variety of inborn characteristics, such as hearing acuity, neurological processing machinery, and brain functioning that help determine how fast and how well children

will learn these tasks. But unless they have specific in-born disabilities, children will learn human characteristics.

On the other side of the coin are cultural characteristics that affect the specific ways in which developmental potential is realized. Culture determines which objects are worthy of being categorized, which people children should care for, what language is to be spoken. If we use the example of language, we can say that learning language, or the ability to symbolize thoughts in words, is a human accomplishment and that the ease or difficulty that children will have in realizing their potential is shaped by their unique genetic characteristics. But in order to learn to speak, children must participate in a particular language community, and the grammar, social rules, and cognitive challenges of the child's linguistic community shape his or her language abilities (Rogoff, 1984). Therefore, whether a child speaks Spanish or Black English, uses standard grammar, speaks to the teacher politely, or uses many or a few words to express ideas depends largely on what people in his or her community do, not simply on the child's intrinsic capabilities. Thus, in development, biological and cultural characteristics are inextricably interwoven.

The ability to form and value social contracts begins in the first infant/caregiver relationships and continues throughout life. The relationship that evolves as caregivers respond to the dependent infant forms the first links of the social ties that guide development. Children learn to establish and verify perceptions and beliefs about the world through direct teaching by the older people in their community and through identification with those people who care for them and are emotionally important to them. Emotional/social ties bind children first to their primary caregivers and then to others in their group, providing the impetus to think, feel, and behave like them.

Social interactions are not haphazard. Although cultures may be highly complex and may change constantly as groups adapt to new challenges, the meaning that group members attribute to experience is relatively stable and represents almost unconscious definitions of what is right and, therefore, normal human behavior (Bowman, 1989). Cultural patterns of interaction guide the developing child, but they also become the basis for their definitions of themselves—their identity. Children become what they live.

This model of development—positing a broad normal range of individual and cultural variation—leads to the following question: Are all child rearing environments equally good for helping children reach their developmental potential? The answer is no. The evidence is clear that some early environments result in children's failing to thrive physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively. Such environments are characterized by poverty, abuse, and neglect. But it is extremely difficult to

predict how a particular environment will affect an individual child. Environmental effects are buffered by social support systems, personal resiliency and vulnerability, and the meaning that people attribute to the care and education they provide for children. Thus, some children who are reared in what might be considered hazardous circumstances are not developmentally impaired. Therefore, while identifying risk factors in children and their environments is useful, risks do not predict development and should not be used to determine developmental status or educational placement.

Developmental Competence

By the time children are five years old, the vast majority have learned a great deal. They have reached "developmental competence" and "maturity," meaning that they have achieved the normative learning benchmarks of their community. They have mastered their home languages, established appropriate social relationships with their families and neighbors, learned a variety of category and symbol systems, and developed the ability to organize and regulate their own behavior in situations that are familiar to them. These benchmarks coordinate biological growth and social learning, and under ordinary circumstances children's knowledge and skills match those required in the social settings in which they live.

On the basis of this definition, children should come to school ready to learn. If they fit into their families and communities, then we know that they are good learners and we need only worry about the small minority of children who have handicapping conditions or who live in extremely hazardous environments and therefore have not learned what their community teaches.

This scenario is, of course, not true to real life. We also must worry about another kind of readiness "problem," the problem that exists when a child's growth trajectory or prior knowledge and skills do not prepare him or her for the demands of a new setting—the school. A child may be developmentally competent in his or her home environment, yet unable to adapt easily to a school environment or succeed at the academic tasks valued by teachers. The distinction between developmental failure and social mismatch has been clarified by Kagan (1990), Meisels, et al. (1992), and others. This distinction is important because it reminds educators of the developmental competence of children whose skills and knowledge are different from those expected by a school.

Developmentally competent children respond to new situations by selecting from a pool of possible behaviors. Their selection is guided by their understanding of what the situation (context) requires. Because a child chooses a particular response in a given situation does not mean that he or she is incapable of another, only that the one chosen is consistent with the requirements of the

situation as he or she understands it. For instance, Lawson (1986) pointed out that the pattern of answering questions characteristic of African-American children is different from that of white children. The study described how African-American children's remarks were more likely to be analogical or answers that related objects or events to themselves or their experience. White children were more likely to use referential answers or ones that named the object or event. While all of the children gave answers of both types, the frequency with which children from each group used each response type was different. That is, children from both races could make both analogic and referential responses, but they were more likely to use the type that was appropriate in their past experience with similar situations. Based on their experience, the children in each group understood the meaning of the question differently. All of the children were developmentally competent, but they had learned to demonstrate their competence differently.

Developmental competence can be displayed only by specific cultural achievements. We know that children can form relationships, because they interact with other people in mutually intelligible ways. We know that they can categorize things, because they perform this function in the same way as people in their community. We know that children can talk, because they speak a language. We know that they understand the concept of numbers, because they use socially agreed upon number tags. Developmental accomplishments and cultural manifestation are bound together, and, as a consequence, specific behaviors come to be synonymous with development itself. However, we can be led astray when we try to use specific accomplishments to compare development across cultural settings and social practices.

Standardized testing and screening young children vividly demonstrates the danger of using white, middle-class children as the gauge for judging other children. It is not coincidence that poor and minority children are over-represented in certain types of early intervention, special education, and at-risk programs. Because tests fail to separate culture from development, they attribute a child's inability to perform particular tasks to developmental delay. The child may know something else that is a developmental equivalent, but if he or she does not know what is on the test, we assume that there is something wrong. After all, if the child were normal, he or she would have learned to perform the task.

An example of the misuse of such instruments occurred recently when I asked a special education teacher about the language disabilities for which preschool children were enrolled in her class. She assured me that all of the students were there for valid reasons: they had failed certain portions of a screening test. Further questioning revealed, however, that she had no idea of the linguistic

environments in which the children lived. Yet, she was providing a treatment that emphasized slowing down and oversimplifying language for all of the children as if they were all developmentally disabled. This approach provides exactly the wrong treatment for a developmentally normal but culturally different child who can and will learn more if given a normalized language environment.

When practitioners assume that there is a "mainstream behavior" that should be used as the sole criterion for healthy development, children find themselves misdiagnosed and inappropriately treated and find their learning potential miscalculated, not because they have not learned a great deal, but because they have not learned the things that schools value. Misunderstanding cultural differences leads schools inappropriately to place minority children who are developmentally normal into special education and low-ability groups, and to expect less from them than from other children. For instance, they tend to evaluate poor black children as less mature and hold lower expectations for them than for children whose socioeconomic status is higher (Entwisle and Alexander, 1989). Such an interpretation of cultural differences presents an obstacle to children's learning in school.

Confusing development with specific cultural accomplishments has led to a misunderstanding of children's abilities, resulting in poorly designed educational programs and practices. By equating a child's developmental competence with a particular form of behavior, teachers misread the meaning of the child's behavior and are led toward practices that compromise the child's potential for learning.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity and School Failure

Teaching supports learning only when the meaning of children's and teachers' behavior is mutually intelligible. Teaching consists of "meaning making" episodes as adults and children create common interpretations of events and actions and standard ways of representing these interpretations. Teachers understand the meaning of children's behavior, in part, from their own experience. Their subjective understanding is essential, since young children have limited ability to say how they think and feel and why they behave as they do. They depend upon teachers' ability to understand without words—an empathic understanding. Anna Freud (1963), in describing the needs of young children, wrote, "We have to rely upon the capacity of the normal adult to remember things" (p. 22) to supplement the adult's understanding of children. Because adults have access to their own memories, they can make sense of the behavior of young children and develop interpretive connections between their acts of teaching and the meaning that their behavior will have for children.

But teachers are also victims of their own past experience. Teachers, like all of us, make generalizations about other people, ideas, and events on the basis of their personal constructions of reality. Considerable research documents that teachers have difficulty incorporating new visions of reality that conflict with their own personal beliefs and experience (Ball, 1989). When confronted with discrepancies, teachers cling to their own "meaning making" theories, forcing contrary evidence to fit their old beliefs. Thus, behavior that does not fit their preconceived notions is manipulated to conform to their sense-making hypotheses.

When adults and children do not share common experiences or hold common beliefs about the meaning of experience, they are apt to misunderstand culturally encoded interchanges (Bowman, 1989). Thus, teachers fail to appreciate real similarities and differences between their understanding of the world and that of children and families who come from different backgrounds. They become victims of their own naive and culture-bound conceptions.

Conflicts between home and school may occur over how children have been taught to view the world, the qualities of interpersonal relationships, standards of behavior, and the goals and objectives of education. Home, community, and school/center environments may value some of the same competencies, but differences in expression may obscure their common root. For example, "creativity" may show up in graffiti, "task persistence" may be demonstrated in playing video games, but neither predicts diligence and inventiveness in classroom activities. Similarly, children socialized in communities that value physical aggression and "macho" behavior may have considerable difficulty learning to suppress such behavior in school, just as children more conservatively socialized may feel deeply threatened by open aggression in the school yard. Both the children who tolerate high levels of aggressive behavior and those who do not acquired their characteristics through the normal developmental process of identification with the values and behavior of family and friends. The point is not that high or low levels of aggression are desirable, but that their acquisition is a normal accomplishment in some communities. Schools, by valuing low-aggression children, set the stage for cultural conflict for those who do not believe that physical docility can reflect competence and effectiveness.

Racism and classism also contribute to conflicts between schools and poor and minority children and families. For instance, when schools represent an Anglocentric and middle-class viewpoint, students and their families often feel devalued. This experience is common to many Spanish-speaking children. For these children, the issue is less one of language (difficulty in acquiring English) than of a social context in which these children, their families, and their communities are undervalued. Instead of reinforcing children's self-confidence and self-esteem, school

compromises their learning potential by rejecting their language and culture. Even more serious, by devaluing the culture of poor and minority children, teachers encourage an ominous cultural choice: identify with family and friends and disavow the school, or embrace school culture and face emotional/social isolation. The result is that many young children opt for family and friends and become unwilling participants in school culture.

Ogbu (1992) points out that not all groups in our society experience the same type of prejudice and discrimination. He notes that "involuntary" minorities (primarily African-Americans, Native Americans, and some Hispanics) are exposed to a more pervasive and extensive exclusion from the mainstream than are other minorities. These groups are more likely to avoid learning skills associated with the white middle class, since their efforts will not pay off with the same opportunities that others derive. Consequently, they develop oppositional practices that separate them from the mainstream as a form of group cohesion and support. Thus, school achievement leads to the loss of peer affiliation and support.

Bilingual/bicultural classes and Afrocentric curricula are attempts to "even the playing field" so that the language and culture of these groups are perceived as equally valued and powerful. Projects such as the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP) have demonstrated that when children are not required to renounce their cultural heritage, school achievement improves markedly (Tharp, 1989).

Caregivers mediate social situations for young children, helping them transfer what they know and can do from one context to another. By providing emotional support, by reminding them of what they already know, by defining the similarities between social situations, and by modeling appropriate behavior, families help children use their skills and acquire new ones. When the social distance between families and the school prevents parents from providing this type of support, children's emotional resiliency is diminished. When children do not have the support of important caregivers, they must use their school time trying to figure out for themselves the new rules of social engagement. Consider what happens when children who are accustomed to adults who are authoritarian, personal, and expressive encounter teachers who are indirect, impersonal, and not given to highly emotional displays. They may spend their time in class trying to test the teacher's limits and elicit a response from the teacher, instead of learning the content of the lesson.

The loss of the home social support system is the reason that some child advocates recommend educating young children within their own cultural and linguistic communities, contending that they learn best when there is a great deal of consistency in their lives—consistency in people, in social and physical environments, and in learning tasks.

Conclusions

No standard strategies exist to direct cross-cultural professional practice. Making developmental practices responsive to cultural differences presents a significant challenge for teachers, requiring them to adopt role definitions, curricula, and teaching practices that challenge rather than reflect the values of the wider society and themselves. However, only when teachers do so will young children be encouraged to extend their learning to include the things that schools consider important, and only then will their parents endorse the school as a partner in their children's education. Educating culturally and linguistically diverse students will require a multifaceted approach to school change. The following recommendations will move us toward this goal:

- *Emphasize prevention.* The prevention of school failure is less costly in both monetary and human terms than treating the problems that arise from unresponsive educational programs. The preschool and primary years are critical ones if children are to be successful in school, and we must carefully review the treatment of children during these years to determine whether it is sufficiently responsive to cultural and linguistic differences.

- *Enhance the quality of children's preschool experience.* School readiness can be increased by high-quality preschool education and day care. Policies that raise the quality of early environments will increase the probability of school readiness for many children, particularly poor children. Such policies would include raising licensing standards for early childhood programs (Howes, et al., 1992), providing more family resource and support services (Powell, 1991), and stimulating better collaboration between schools and the other human services (Kagan, 1991).

- *Use authentic assessments for children considered at-risk of school difficulty.* Risks do not predict individual development. Assessments of individual children should focus on each child's unique response to his or her experience rather than assume a stereotype based on the child's social and economic background. In order for assessments of young children's functioning to be reliable and valid, they must use multiple methods and sources and be obtained over time, in a variety of settings, within the context of children's daily lives.

- *Listen to the voices of excluded minorities.* It is essential that minority communities feel a greater sense of ownership regarding school standards if they are to cooperate in preparing their children. Involvement by parents and community members from these minority groups in setting nationwide readiness criteria can help diffuse this issue.

- *Change how schools interact with other community institutions.* Collaboration with social service and health delivery systems is just the beginning. Establishing cooperative relationships with park districts, libraries, day care centers, and homes is equally important. Any school that is not collaborating cannot seriously claim to be focusing on educational success for all.

- *Prepare teachers and schools to educate a greater range of children.* Early childhood personnel need to be better prepared to help children for whom school represents a major challenge. As noted above, when the match between children's prior experience and the expectations of schools is too great, children are less likely to succeed. Mismatches occur when developmental criteria, expectations for individual performance, and definitions for members of various culture groups are overly narrow or rigid.

The kind of change we want to accomplish is not easy. It will require the utmost skill and effort from all of us if it is to happen. Unless we speak out about the relationship between culture, development, and education, we cannot hope to provide the kind of schooling needed to carry us safely into the 21st century. The policy choice is either to broaden schools' approach to teaching to one that is more consistent with what is known about child development or to continue to follow traditional policies, knowing that many children will continue to be unprepared and their failure will be inevitable.

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